

Title: A Speech, 3/9/2024

Author: Narcissus Bennu

---

“Hello... uh, hello...”

: coughs a bit to clear  
his throat

“Ah, yes, hello...”

: offers a small wave to  
the crowd

“Ah, well. Hmm.”

“I never expected to be  
in front of a crowd  
again, but this will do.  
Yes, this will do just  
fine.”

“When I was asked to  
speak tonight, I wasn’t  
exactly sure why. I’m  
just an old man, an old  
man that told a few  
stories.”

“...not important, no,  
not important... you were  
the important ones...”

“I wasn’t sure what I  
should say, I’m still not,  
but I asked two questions  
of myself.”

“One, what is a library,  
why is this one  
important?”

“That is a simple enough  
question on the surface, I  
suppose. A library is a  
place to find books!”

: snorts with a bit of  
self-amused humor

“Ah, but this library in  
particular isn’t just  
books, is it? No, this  
library is OUR books.”

“Yes, OUR books.

Because in spite of what  
the by-line might say on  
any particular volume, the  
books contained here are  
OUR stories... Not mine,  
not Isk’s, not  
GreyPawn’s, Not  
Joanna’s... Not even  
Cear’s or Halister’s...

these books contain a  
shared arc of storytelling  
which weave and whisper  
the passion of lives  
lived..."

"Our stories of intimate  
connection, I don't  
mean... sexiness, though, I  
suppose there is that  
too. I only mean that  
stories are what bind us  
together in shared  
experience. The intimacy  
of connection. Those  
experiences can be small,  
maybe you met a girl on  
the streets of Minoc as  
a boy, you don't  
remember her name... or  
what she looked like, you  
only remember the scent  
that the wind greeted  
you with as she passed,  
or you remember the way  
you felt when she  
returned your smile..."

: looks a little lost and

stares blankly at the  
floor for a moment

"...a small moment, not  
an important one. Or  
maybe the moment that  
King Blackthorn welcomed  
the first town council,  
eh? That was a big  
moment, yes, that was an  
important moment."

: nods to himself and  
those gathered

"But the moments in  
these tomes reflect  
generations of people,  
some of whom are gone,  
some of which remain,  
some of which were  
penned by tired old  
men..."

"So, why is this library  
important? ...That was  
the first question, yes,  
I'm sure that was it."

"This library is  
important because it  
houses the combined  
efforts, the binding  
stories, and the  
connections between  
people. That is why we

are all here, isn't it? To feel connected, to share moments of companionship with a stranger in the sincere hope that they become a friend, yes?"

"So, here it is. Books that chronicle that quest, words from a thousand souls, shouting into the world, 'I am not alone!' and they found out that they weren't."

: shifts a bit

"There was another question, yes?"

: coughs

"Oh, right, right... it was, why me? Why should I be the one to stand up here and say something about the importance of stories?"

"That one is a bit more difficult to answer than the first. As a boy I fell in love with my own reflection, stupid boy... but then I suppose the stupidity of youth can be forgiven by old men... as a man I helped you weave your own stories into a context of moments, just a storyteller, you all are the important ones, you always were..."

"...as an old man, I prefer to be forgotten, or when remembered, fondly... rather than foolishly. Britannia has moved on from my ramblings, and rightfully so. The world belongs to the young."

"Our shared friend, Mr. Halister Marner has built a monolith, a treasure of our shared stories and experiences. Sing his praises, as it is your own melody which will echo back to you. This isn't a building for him, this is a gift, a gift to every single one of us. A passion, a nostalgia which

begs not to call us back,  
but only to page through  
and remember fondly.”

“We must remember  
those that passed beyond,  
hear their words, page  
through their stories and  
be curious about what  
they whisper to us from  
a generation ago, two  
generations ago,  
longer...”

“As I page through and  
read this evening, and  
many evenings in the  
future...”

: pauses suddenly and  
takes a weak breath

“...I will only ask one  
more question...”

: licks his lips and blinks,  
trying to stave off a  
tear

“...I will ask...”

“Can’t we just go back  
to page one and do it all  
over again?”

: stands quietly for a  
moment and nods to  
Halister

: takes a step away from  
the lectern